

# Public Schools in Duval County



## Timeline of Major Events

1864 – 2014



**1864** Spring  
J.M. Hawks opens first free public school in the state, attracting equal number of white and black students; all but three white leave.

**1869** Mar.  
Duval County's first Board of Public Instruction is appointed by the state Board of Education, with five members. Later this year, the first Superintendent of Public Instruction is appointed.

**1894**  
James Weldon Johnson, who attended Stanton where his mother taught, takes over as principal of Stanton. (Johnson becomes famous for writing the Negro National Anthem.) There are 1,000 students and 25 teachers at the school.

**1900**  
Duval County spends \$12.04 per pupil for white students; \$5.47 per pupil for black students.

**1901** The Great Fire

### THE FIRST CENTURY

**1868**  
Stanton Normal Institute has 400 students and seven teachers.

**1873**  
Second Board of Education is established via public election. The first graduating class of Duval County High School numbers three. Duval High is the first high school in state with its own building and faculty.

**1877**  
1,252 PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

**1883**  
2,665 PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

**1898**  
1898

**1900**  
6,795 PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT  
39,733 DUVAL COUNTY POPULATION

**1910**  
9,861 PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT  
75,163 DUVAL COUNTY POPULATION

**1914**  
Duval County OKs \$1 million bond issue to fund major expansion plan, replacing wooden schools with brick buildings.

**1914**  
Following a suit by Mary White Blocker, an African American teacher, the court orders a single salary schedule be applied to all teachers, regardless of race. (Blocker, forced to retire after she filed suit, continued to receive her pay through the Duval County Negro Teachers Association for 23 years.)

**1942**  
1942

**1950**  
48,000 PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT  
304,029 DUVAL COUNTY POPULATION

**1953**  
J. Irving Scott is named director of Negro education for the Duval County public school system. He served in that role until 1960.

**1955**  
1955

**1957**  
66,542 PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT  
381,700 DUVAL COUNTY POPULATION

**1960**  
Discrimination suit is filed by NAACP in U.S. District Court on behalf of two black students refused admission to white schools in the county. Suit claims School Board operates racially segregated schools and that racial factors are used in determining placement. School officials later acknowledge that all 89 white and 24 black schools were totally segregated by students, teachers and administrators.

**1962**  
Due to poor conditions in schools and lack of financial support, the Chamber of Commerce initiates a citizens' School Bootstrap Committee, chaired by attorney Harry Kinkaid, to examine problems in the system.

**1963** Nov.  
The Bootstrap Committee issues its report, a call to action urging the community to mobilize to reform public schools. Report severely criticizes the curriculum, physical conditions, administration and finances of system, saying teachers and students are the primary victims. Teachers are poorly paid, resources limited, classrooms overcrowded. Dropout rate is high. School policies affected by 8 different elected boards with much conflict and overlap. The elected superintendent, only elected one among 20 largest systems in the nation, rarely makes unpopular decisions. System has severe lack of financial support. Report concludes taxpayers are not doing their share.

**1964** Dec.  
After repeated warning, 15 Duval County schools are discredited by SACS due to lack of financial support, including Fletcher, Forrest, Raines, Parker, Englewood, Ribault, Butler, Paxon, Lee, Stanton, Baldwin and Jackson. (40,000 people had signed petitions urging SACS to delay discreditation.)

**1964** Dec.  
To expedite integration, NAACP, supported by Interdenominational Ministers Alliance, institutes school boycott. 17,000 black youngsters skip school one day; the next day, 10,000 stay away.

**1964** Dec.  
Judge Simpson rules the Single System Geographic Plan has failed to create a unitary school system and orders the establishment of a single system for all grades; decrees students can no longer transfer to schools of their choice.

**1969**  
Cecil Hardesty becomes the first appointed superintendent.

**1970**  
114,045 PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT  
528,865 DUVAL COUNTY POPULATION

**1971**  
Last of discredited high schools regains SACS accreditation.

**1975** Dec.  
U.S. District Judge Gerald B. Tjoflat orders School Board to implement full desegregation through massive cross-town busing. Reluctant School Board complies by busing African-American 1st-5th graders across town to suburban white schools, establishing 6th and 7th grade centers in inner city to bus white students, and making marginal changes in redistricting high schools. There are 113 totally segregated schools, 89 white and 24 black.

**1975** Dec.  
NAACP asks Judge Tjoflat to hold School Board in contempt for failing to comply with 1971 court order.

**1981** Apr.  
School Board unanimously elects Wendell Holmes as its first black chairman.

**1981** Apr.  
Stanton College Preparatory School opens as the county's first academic magnet school.

### YEARS OF TURMOIL: DISACCREDITATION & DESEGREGATION

**1954**  
In *Brown v. Board of Education*, U.S. Supreme Court rules segregation in public schools is unconstitutional.

**1959**  
Times-Union reports that 47 schools lack proper safety features, resulting in \$35 million bond issue for capital improvements.

**1960**  
U.S. District Judge Bryan Simpson says the school system violates *Brown v. Board of Education*, saying a dual, segregated system exists in Duval County. He orders the School Board to stop operating a compulsory biracial school system and to develop plans for the total elimination of a segregated school system.

**1962** Aug.  
Two years after Ruby Bridges becomes the first black child to desegregate an elementary school in the South, the School Board proposes a plan for neighborhood schools open to all students living nearby, integrating initially in the first and second grades, then one additional grade a year thereafter. Known as a Single System Geographic Plan to End Segregation, the plan was to integrate all 12 grades by 1974.

**1962** Sep.  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools threatens to withdraw accreditation in a year because of instructional deficiencies. The public refuses to accept reevaluation of property or additional taxes to improve school funding. Duval County is spending \$299 per student; the state average spending per student is \$372.

**1962** Dec.  
George Peabody College of Teachers in Nashville is commissioned by School Board and superintendent to study Duval school finances, curriculum, teacher training and host of other issues.

**1965**  
Peabody report broadly criticizes school system. Cites a lack of materials, overcrowded classrooms, lack of supervisory skills, financial handicaps, failure to require teachers to hold certificates for subjects being taught. Concludes the prestige of public education in Duval County has deteriorated steadily for two generations.

**1965** Spring  
Florida Legislature passes legislation calling for appointed superintendent in Duval County. Brant, however, has just been elected to a third four-year term, so the effective date for the change is delayed.

**1965** Dec.  
125,000 PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT  
508,900 DUVAL COUNTY POPULATION

**1968**  
The governments of the City of Jacksonville and Duval County merge into one unified and consolidated government.

**1968**  
School budget is \$68 million, compared with \$34 million in 1964.

**1968**  
Teachers statewide, including those in Duval County — black and white — walk off the job to protest the state Legislature's method of funding public education.

**1974**  
102,828 PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT  
568,000 DUVAL COUNTY POPULATION

**1974**  
101,000 PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT  
571,003 DUVAL COUNTY POPULATION

**1975** Dec.  
JCCI study on desegregation finds a gradual resegregating of the schools has taken place since the court order and that 6th & 7th grade centers are not educationally sound. Study says schools need more involvement of citizens in definition and development of standards, goals and curriculum; School Board should review its policy regarding evaluation of supervisors and teachers to identify personnel who need to be counseled or terminated.

**1977** Apr.  
Duval Teachers United is created in a merger of Duval Teacher Association (affiliated with NEA) and Jacksonville Federation of Teachers (affiliated with AFT) and Florida State Teachers Association, an organization representing black teachers.

**1980**  
Cabinet resolution praises Ribault achievement

**1981** Apr.  
1981

### YEARS OF REPAIR: MEETING NEW DEMANDS

**1974**  
1974

**1975**  
1975

**1980**  
1980

**1869**  
A.J. Russell

**1869-1870**  
W.L. Coan

**1871-1873**  
W.H. Christy

**1874**  
E. F. Mawbey

**1875-1877**  
John F. Rollins

**1877-1880**  
Frederick Pasco

**1880-1888**  
W.H. Babcock

**1888**  
Walter B. Clarkson

**1889-1891**  
William M. Ledwith

**1891-1897**  
J.D. Mead

**1897-1905**  
George P. Glenn

**1905-1907**  
Hiram H. Palmer

**1907-1913**  
James Q. Palmer

**1913-1925**  
F.A. Hathaway

**1925-1928**  
G. Elmer Wilbur



- 1928-1933 R. B. Rutherford
- 1933-1941 R. C. Marshall
- 1941-1953 W. Daniel Boyd
- 1953-1957 Iva T. Sprinkle
- 1957-1969 Ish Brant
- 1969-1973 Cecil Hardesty
- 1973-1976 John T. Gunning
- 1976-1989 Herb A. Sang
- 1989-1997 Larry L. Zenke
- 1997 Donald Van Fleet
- 1998-2004 John C. Fryer, Jr.
- 2005 Nancy Snyder
- 2005-2007 Joseph Wise
- 2007-2012 Ed Pratt-Dannals
- 2012-present Nikolai Vitti



The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida announces the Quality Education for All Fund, a new \$50 million private investment to raise student achievement in Duval County Public Schools, with a specific focus on high-needs schools in Northwest Jacksonville.

2012

A major leadership transition leads to the appointment of Dr. Nikolai P. Vitti as superintendent.

2005

Thirty-four years after federal courts ordered Duval County schools desegregated, more than one third of the county's public schools have student bodies of predominantly one race. During the height of desegregation, the goal was to have all schools achieve at least a 70/30 ratio of majority/minority students. In 2005, 47 percent of the county's high schools do not meet that goal; 38 percent of middle schools do not and 32 percent of elementary schools do not meet that goal.

2005

On improving public education in Duval County. It leads to more than \$50 million in private investment in public education and the creation of the Jacksonville Public Education Fund in 2009.



The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida launches Quality Education for All, a 10-year initiative focused



First results from No Child Left Behind lead to 440 student transfers.

2003

Passing FCAT becomes a requirement for graduation and a requirement for promotion of third-graders.

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2002

Sweeping accountability measures at the state and national levels create new systems to evaluate and improve how well schools are performing. Under statewide grading plan, 33 Duval County schools receive Ds or Fs. Meanwhile, the 2001 national No Child Left Behind legislation aims to measure and close the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students.

JCCI report: "Beyond the Talk: Improving Race Relations" finds great differences in education results between blacks and whites, with disparities in graduation rates, dropout rates and test scores made worse by disparities in income.



2001

Non-profit Schultz Center for Teaching and Leadership established to provide educators in Northeast Florida counties of Duval, Baker, Clay, Nassau and St. Johns with professional development services for educators.

2001



After continued community complaints, year-round schooling is abolished and all schools open on a unified calendar.

Aug. 1998

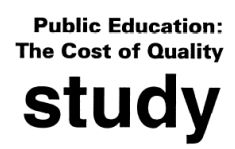
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1998

New Century Commission on Education, appointed by the School Board and mayor as a community effort to set directions for the school district, expresses concern about overall quality of education in Duval County. Recommends 155 new initiatives.

1996

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is designated as the evaluation tool to measure how well students are learning the skills outlined in the Sunshine State Standards, replacing Florida Writes, Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills and others. The FCAT also is used to measure school achievement with a formula that rewards schools for high achievements or marked improvements.



U.S. District Judge Terrell Hodges rules that the policy is constitutional. Decision is appealed to the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, but constitutionality is ultimately upheld.

1993

JCCI study finds the school system lacks clear vision of high-quality public education, clear measures of educational outcomes and a process to improve quality. School Advisory Councils begin

1991

Year-round curriculum begins in some schools; under modified calendar, students attend 60-day sessions separated by 15-day breaks during school year. 7th grade centers are eliminated; middle schools established for grades 6-8.

1991

Federal lawsuit filed by three high school seniors and a parent, backed by ACLU, to prohibit student-led prayer during graduation.

1989

11th Circuit Court of Appeals calls Moore's decision "clearly erroneous," reverses the ruling and says the system should remain under court order. School Board approves year-round schooling as a means of improving learning and efficiency of operations. Mandarin Oaks Elementary, the first of the county's "mega-schools" opens with 1,000+ students.



Dec. 1986

School Board recommends another bond issue. Task force led by Charles E. Hughes Jr., president of Florida National Bank, and Ronnie Ferguson, president of the Jacksonville Urban League, holds public meetings and champions a \$195 million issue. Emphasis is on new schools in the south and southeast parts of county, but also a new Northside high school and improvements to Raines and Ribault high schools.

1985

School Board votes to ask U.S. District Judge John Moore II to lift the 1971 court order. NAACP goes back to court claiming segregation has increased since the 1971 ruling. Judge Moore, however, closes the desegregation case, meaning the court will no longer monitor the School Board's efforts to achieve integration.

This timeline was originally commissioned by The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida in 2005, at the time of their launch of the Quality Education for All initiative. It was updated by the Jacksonville Public Education Fund in 2014 in commemoration of the Community Foundation's 50th anniversary and in gratitude for their work to alter the course of public education in Duval County. To learn more, visit [www.jaxpef.org](http://www.jaxpef.org).

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Page 2, l-r: Family of Willye Dennis; Duval County Public Schools; Jacksonville Community Council, Inc.; The Florida Times-Union archives; State Archives of Florida; Florida Memory; Ed Foster; <http://floridamemory.com/items/show/23857>; Foundation for Excellence in Education; Alan Alfano; The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida; Ingrid Damiani

## YEARS OF REPAIR

1985

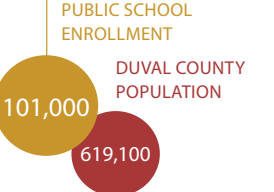
Voters defeat by 689 votes a \$113 million school bond issue designed to finance a 13-year school construction program. Advocates blame failure by school officials to promote need community-wide and failure to emphasize improvements in the black community.

1988

Judge Moore rules the school system has eliminated the vestiges of segregation and is operating a unitary school system. Voters approve \$199 million school bond issue by vote of 68,000 to 41,572.

June 1986

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1985

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1990

Willye Dennis, President of the local NAACP, reopens the federal desegregation lawsuit to force the School Board to renegotiate more equitable terms; School Board and NAACP reach agreement on a plan that stops forced busing and creates a system of magnet programs in an attempt to voluntarily desegregate the schools by drawing children out of single-race neighborhoods.



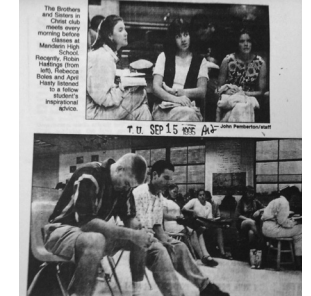
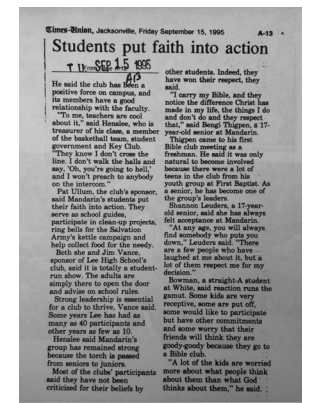
Full Service Schools program begins, using schools to house community agencies to provide education, medical, social and other human services to children and their families.

1992

Six families backed by Planned Parenthood file suit challenging the school systems' abstinence-based sex education curriculum, saying it is not a comprehensive sex education program, cites inaccuracies and bias in the curriculum.

1995

The School Board ultimately abandons the curriculum, adopting an abstinence-based curriculum that includes discussion of the use of contraceptives, reproductive health and AIDS. The lawsuit was rendered moot.



1997

School Board seeks to have federal court declare it fully desegregated, prompting a three-week trial in which witnesses say two-thirds of schools have reached racial balance goals, but elementary schools in core city remain mostly black. First three charter schools open.

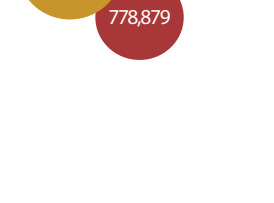
1999

Jacksonville Chamber launches "Academy for World Class Education" as a way to educate business leaders about the school system and prepare them to be partners and advocates. Program's weaknesses were little mechanism for action and failure to involve the school system in the process.

## AN ERA OF CHANGE: NEW CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

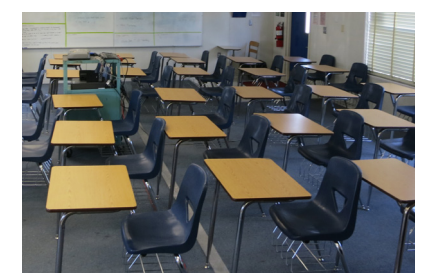
2000

U.S. District Judge William Terrell Hodges rules public schools are being run without racial discrimination to the maximum extent possible. Jacksonville's Duval Public Education Foundation is folded into the non-profit Alliance for World Class Education, which brings together business and community leaders to help improve the local education system.



2002

Duval Teachers United, School Board, and business community established Creating Opportunities that Result in Excellence (CORE) to offer financial incentives to teachers whose students' performance improves at low-performing schools.



2002

Council of Great City Schools Management Assessment Project declares management of Duval County Public Schools to be outstanding in many respects, but also finds key functional areas that need improvement. Makes 145 recommendations for improvement.

Fall 2002

Alliance for World Class Education, with support from Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce, begins to target school board races in search of a broader range of candidates with strong ties into the community and related backgrounds rather than the norm of retired teachers and PTA presidents.

2004

JCCI report "Eliminating the Achievement Gap" finds absence of ongoing dialogue with citizens, inadequate childcare facilities to prepare children for kindergarten, lack of teacher compensation and inadequate help for low-performing students. Recommendations include increased funding for preschool education, better teacher compensation and academic help for all students not performing at their grade level.

Jun. 2005

Duval County schools receive the best grades since 1999, based primarily on the FCATs taken in grades 3 to 10: 71 As, 23 Bs, 43 Cs and 12 Ds. Six Duval County schools are named among the top 100 schools in Florida.

2011

The Jacksonville Public Education Fund launches ONE by ONE, a campaign to rally the community to set a collective vision for public education and carry it out.

2013



Duval County posts a graduation rate of 72.1 percent, representing a rapid and steady increase from 55.8 percent five years prior.

## AN ERA OF CHANGE: NEW CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES